

VZCZCXRO4359
PP RUEHLA
DE RUEHMD #0116/01 0221255
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 221255Z JAN 07
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1682
INFO RUEHLA/AMCONSUL BARCELONA 2382

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 000116

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

WHA FOR A/S SHANNON AND PDAS SHAPIRO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/21/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: SENIOR SPANISH OPPOSITION OFFICIAL REITERATES
CRITICISM OF GOS POLICY/SUPPORT FOR U.S. AGENDA

REF: A. MADRID 81

[1](#)B. MADRID 87

[1](#)C. 2006 MADRID 3081

Classified By: DCM Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. The DCM on January 16 met with Angel Acebes, Secretary General of the opposition Popular Party (PP) and

SIPDIS

Minister of Interior under former President Aznar. The meeting covered a myriad of foreign policy issues. Acebes reiterated his party's strong disagreement with the anti-terrorism policies of President Zapatero and the PP's belief that there is absolutely nothing to negotiate with ETA. Acebes also professed his party's strong support for much of President Bush's foreign policy agenda. On Cuba, the DCM thanked the PP for raising a Parliamentary motion on December 19 calling for unity among Spanish political parties in supporting a democratic transition in Cuba. Although Zapatero's far-left allies in Parliament scuttled the effort, Acebes said his party will bring this resolution up again in the coming weeks. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) In a January 16 introductory courtesy call on Angel Acebes, Secretary General of the opposition Popular Party (PP), the DCM reviewed the current areas of close cooperation between the U.S. and Spain in NATO, Afghanistan, and Lebanon. The DCM discussed our close cooperation now and particularly in the past with the PP and the Aznar government, but said that it was important for us to now work with the current GOS on a variety of issues. Acebes replied that he understood this perfectly, indeed it was good for him as a Spaniard that the U.S. and Spain have good working relations, but believed that bilateral relations would improve even more in the future when the PP returns to power. The DCM noted the continued range and frequency of high-level contacts between the Embassy and the PP, including at the Ambassadorial level.

[1](#)3. (C) The DCM asked Acebes for his thoughts on the contentious debate between President Zapatero and PP leader Mariano Rajoy that had taken place in Spanish Parliament the day before (reported separately in REFTEL A), and what has become the defining political issue of the day in Spain, the GOS' policies towards the terrorist group ETA. Acebes stated that Rajoy had indeed been very severe in his criticisms of the President, because this issue was of the most severe importance to the Spanish people. Acebes then added that Rajoy had criticized Zapatero's anti-terrorism policy, "not for the mere purpose of Parliamentary debate or to win elections, but because of the party's strongly-held principles." Despite Zapatero's calls for all of Spain's democratic political parties to join a united anti-terrorist pact, Acebes said that the PP would not join in any coalition with parties that support continued dialogue with ETA or

political participation with ETA's outlawed political wing Batasuna. Acebes said his party fears that a broad pact would also broaden and weaken its terms to accommodate Zapatero's left-wing coalition partners and ultimately give him the wiggle room for a future negotiated settlement.

14. (C) Acebes and the DCM then touched on a full range of foreign policy issues related to Iraq, Iran, and Cuba. The DCM briefed Acebes on the impetus behind President Bush's new strategy for the way forward in Iraq that will include increases in the number of U.S. troops in Baghdad and U.S. economic assistance. The DCM said that the U.S. and the Zapatero Government have agreed to move beyond past disagreements over the war and we continue to appreciate Spain's continued economic assistance to the country. Acebes agreed that the Coalition cannot afford to fail in Iraq and expressed his hope that this change in strategy will serve to get a handle on security in Baghdad and al-Anbar Province. On Iran, Acebes was in agreement on the importance of the U.S. and the E.U. maintaining a united front against that country's nuclear ambitions, and posited that Iran likely represented the "crisis to come." Acebes said that Spain should work within the E.U. to ensure that a hard line is maintained. Acebes expressed his concern with the antics of Iranian President Ahmadinejad during his recent visit to Nicaragua.

15. (C) A discussion of the current situation in Cuba wrapped up the meeting, and Acebes stated that Fidel Castro's health prognosis is likely very bad. Whatever the truth behind recent conflicting reports in Spanish newspapers on the status of Castro's health (REFTEL B), Acebes believes that we are already in a "post-Fidel era," and agreed with the DCM that Raul Castro and other senior regime figures are right now gauging the international community's reaction to events in the country before deciding how to proceed. Acebes stated that for this reason, it is vital for the U.S. and E.U. to

MADRID 00000116 002 OF 002

speak with one voice. The DCM reiterated the importance of the E.U. making a statement of strong support for a democratic Cuba, even if this statement is not made jointly with the U.S., and Acebes agreed. The DCM thanked the PP for raising a Parliamentary motion December 19 calling for unity among Spanish political parties in supporting a democratic transition in Cuba (REFTEL C). Although Foreign Minister Moratinos had signaled to PP Parliamentarians that a common position on Cuba could be negotiated, the PP measure was defeated by the Socialist Party (PSOE) and its far left coalition partners. Acebes told the DCM that the PP intends to bring this resolution up again in the coming weeks and will probably propose a similar motion in the European Parliament, where it expects greater success. (Note: Following this meeting, the DCM met with PP foreign policy advisor Moragas and with the leadership of President Aznar's think tank, FAES, to suggest FAES and the Embassy coordinate on a major seminar on Cuba in Madrid in the coming months. FAES officials were receptive to the idea and undertook to give a definitive answer to the DCM soon.)
Aguirre